

## Physical Distancing in Classrooms

### Introduction

Central District Health (CDH) recognizes the value of in-person learning and the challenge of balancing the risks of COVID-19 and educational, social, and emotional supports. While COVID-19 is circulating in the United States, measures need to be taken in order to ensure that schools operate in a way that minimizes risk to students, staff, and the community.

**The following are Central District Health's recommendations for physical distancing standards for school-aged children in a classroom setting. In keeping with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) recommendations](#), CDH recommends universal indoor masking\* for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.**

***If you are not fully vaccinated and aged two (2) or older, you [should wear a mask in all indoor public places](#). When you wear a mask, you protect others as well as yourself.***

### Instructional Areas (e.g. standard classrooms)

- If possible, six (6) feet of distance should be kept between individuals yet to be vaccinated (unvaccinated) and anyone not in their household. Recognizing that six (6) feet of distance may not be possible, the CDC has advised a three to six (3-6) feet guideline, allowing students to sit closer. Individuals who have yet to be vaccinated (unvaccinated) should wear a mask at all times inside the school building, except to eat or drink.
- Cohorts are still recommended, especially if distancing is not possible, to reduce risk of transmission.
  - A cohort is a group of students that stay together during the school day. Successful cohorting involves minimal or no interaction between groups. Additional information can be found in the CDC's [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#).

### Additional Considerations

- The use of non-traditional spaces such as auditoriums and gymnasiums, as well as outdoor instruction, should still be considered in order to allow for additional distancing, when possible.

- When safe to do so, windows should be opened to increase airflow in the classrooms. In addition to opening the windows, child-safe fans can be utilized near the windows to further increase classroom airflow.
- It is recommended that classroom desks be spaced and face a uniform direction.
  - Additional distancing of students, beyond three (3) feet, is still encouraged when possible. **Six feet is the gold standard** and is recommended when schools have the capability to do so at any transmission level. Six feet of distancing should still be considered due to a mix of vaccination status that may be seen within the school population.
  - At least six (6) feet of distance is highly recommended:
    - Between adults yet to be vaccinated (unvaccinated) and between yet to be vaccinated (unvaccinated) adults and students in the school building.
    - In common areas, such as school lobbies and auditoriums.
    - When masks can't be worn, such as when eating. Mealtimes in classrooms are not recommended if six (6) feet of spacing or cohorting cannot be maintained, unless everyone is fully vaccinated.
    - During activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band practice, sports, or exercise events. These activities should be moved outdoors or to large, well-ventilated spaces whenever possible.
    - In community settings outside of the classroom.
  - For contact tracing, the definition of close contacts has been changed to include an exception for students in K-12 indoor classroom settings\*. This exception states that yet to be vaccinated (unvaccinated) students who are three to six (3-6) feet from a person diagnosed with COVID-19 do not need to quarantine\*\* **if:**
    - Both the ill individual and the contact were appropriately wearing their masks for the duration of the exposure; **and**
    - Other prevention strategies are in place in the school.
      - *\*The K-12 indoor classroom setting is the only place this exception applies. This exception **CANNOT** be applied for exposure in other spaces in the school, extracurricular activities, or the community.*
      - *\*\*These students do not need to quarantine from school or extracurricular activities, but do need to quarantine from the community.*
  - To assist in contact tracing efforts, it is recommended that spacing between workstations be measured, and seating assignments documented.

### **Vaccinations**

- In the event that an individual is exposed to COVID-19 the school should have a protocol in place to verify vaccination status.
- In the event of an exposure, schools should have a protocol in place to verify vaccination status. Those who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine, but should monitor for symptoms.

- If person is **fully vaccinated** and exposed:
  - You should get tested at least 3 days after your exposure, even if you don't have symptoms.
    - The date of exposure is considered day 0.
    - Wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until your test result is negative.
  - Isolate for 10 days if your test result is positive.
- If person is **yet to be vaccinated** (unvaccinated) and exposed:
  - Quarantine for 7 to 14 days.
    - If using the 7-day option, the individual must receive a negative test taken day 5 or later. If the 7 or 10-day quarantine options are used, continue wearing a mask for 14 days after the exposure.
    - The date of exposure is considered day 0.
  - Isolate for 10 days if your test is positive.

## **Resources**

[Your Guide to Masks](#) | **CDC**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

[Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#) | **CDC**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

[K-12 School Quarantine](#) | **CDH**

<https://www.cdh.idaho.gov/pdfs/cd/Coronavirus/Resource%20Docs/schools/2021/School-Quarantine-CDH-Position-FINAL.pdf>